

# Keystage history

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Knowledge organiser

## Pendennis Castle

**Local and British History**



# Pendennis Castle

## CARRICK ROADS

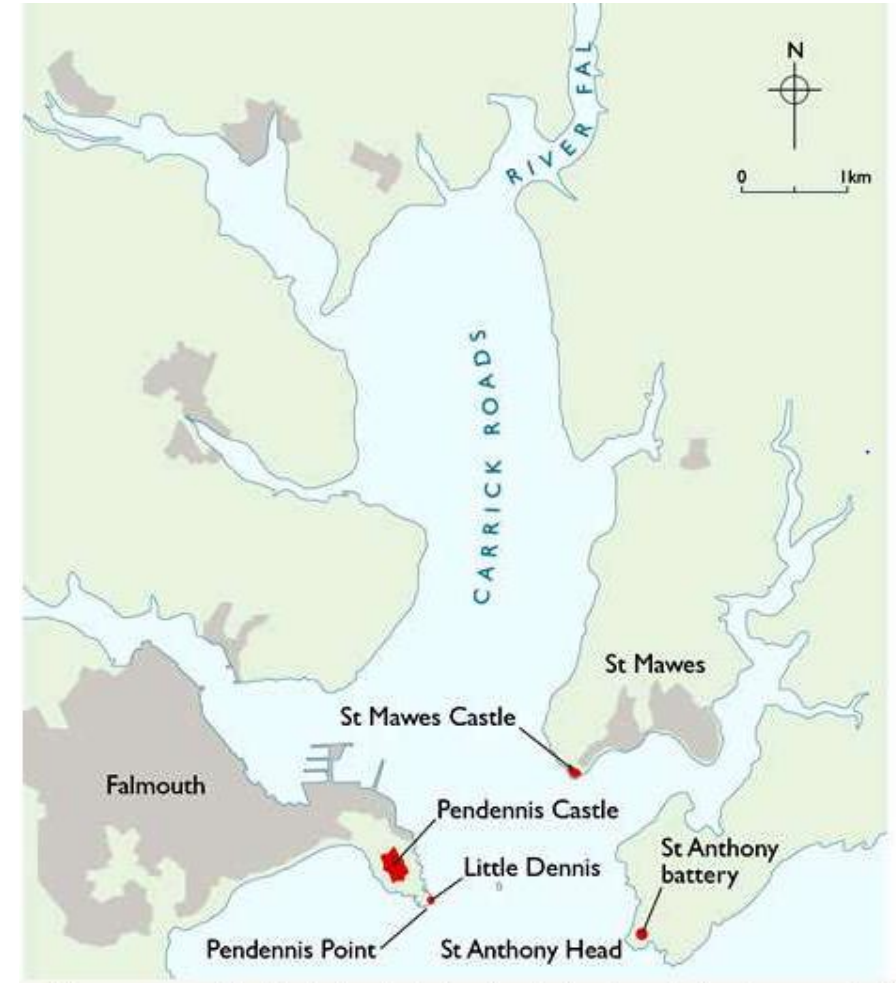
The headland of Pendennis and the point of St Mawes are either side of the mouth of the River Fal, the entrance to Carrick Roads estuary.

The peninsula of Pendennis was an ideal place from which to defend the estuary. There may have been a fort built long before the Tudor period, as the Cornish name for Pendennis, 'Pen Dinas', means 'the fort on the headland'.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, traders in ships of many European nations entering and leaving the English Channel, and explorers crossing to the New World on long journeys across the Atlantic Ocean, used the Carrick Roads as an important, safe place for their ships to anchor on their way to, or returning from, their voyages. Pendennis and St Mawes became important strategic forts over the next 450 years. During this time, England was involved in many power struggles with other nations and was frequently at war. From the 16th century onwards, it was vital to protect the Carrick Roads from foreign invasion. If enemy forces captured the estuary, they would have a base from which they could invade the rest of England.



Carrick Roads estuary is wide and deep, ideal for large ships to enter and weigh anchor.



Map of the area around Pendennis headland, showing the location of other key strategic defences protecting Carrick Roads anchorage and the mouth of the river Fal

## HENRY PROTECTS THE COAST

In 1533, Henry VIII's (1509–47) marriage to Catherine of Aragon was declared invalid and he was able to legally marry Anne Boleyn. A year later, the Act of Supremacy gave Henry absolute authority over the Church in England. The Pope was furious as this meant England rejected the authority of Rome. In response, in 1538, the Pope managed to convince France and Spain (who were often fighting each other) to form an alliance against Henry. This left England isolated, with no powerful allies, and under threat of invasion.

Beginning in 1539, Henry and his government began an extensive period of building coastal forts along the east and south coasts to protect against any attempt at invasion. In 1539, the plan was referred to as a **device by the king** – in other words, the king's plan.



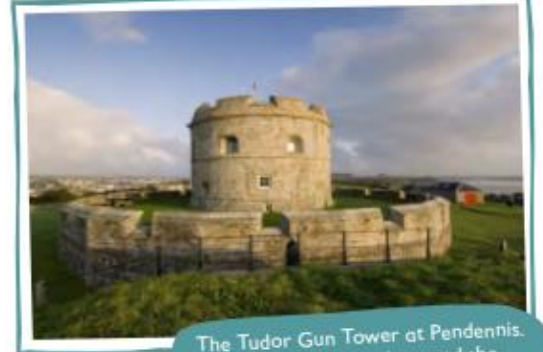
The Act of Parliament that made Henry VIII Supreme Head of the Church in England in 1534 angered much of Catholic Europe, in particular the Pope in Rome, and the important rulers of France and Spain.

## DEVICE FORTS – 360° DEFENCE

By the 1540s, **gunpowder artillery** was a key weapon in warfare. Guns based on either side of the entrance to Carrick Roads could use **crossfire** to stop an enemy ship entering the estuary. Two small **blockhouses** at Pendennis and St Mawes were built close to the waterline as a low level additional line of artillery defence.

The main castles of Pendennis and St Mawes were **artillery forts** built between 1540 and 1545. They were designed to destroy enemy ships attempting to enter Carrick Roads. But they also had guns to defend themselves against a land attack. St Mawes Castle was a three-storey tower with three semi-circular **bastions**. Pendennis Castle was built as a three-storey gun tower, with guns on each level. During building, it was decided to build a **chemise** around the base of Pendennis's tower. This blocked the line of fire of the guns on the lowest level of the Castle, but guns were mounted on the chemise instead.

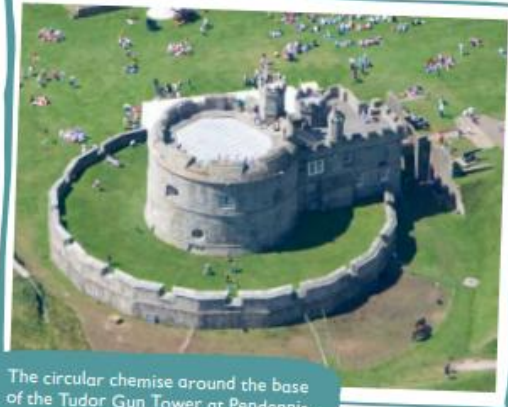
Once completed, the forts had small caretaker **garrisons**: they were only fully **garrisoned** and fully supplied when there was a real threat of attack.



The Tudor Gun Tower at Pendennis. Guns mounted in and around the circular perimeter could give gunfire around a full circle of 360°.

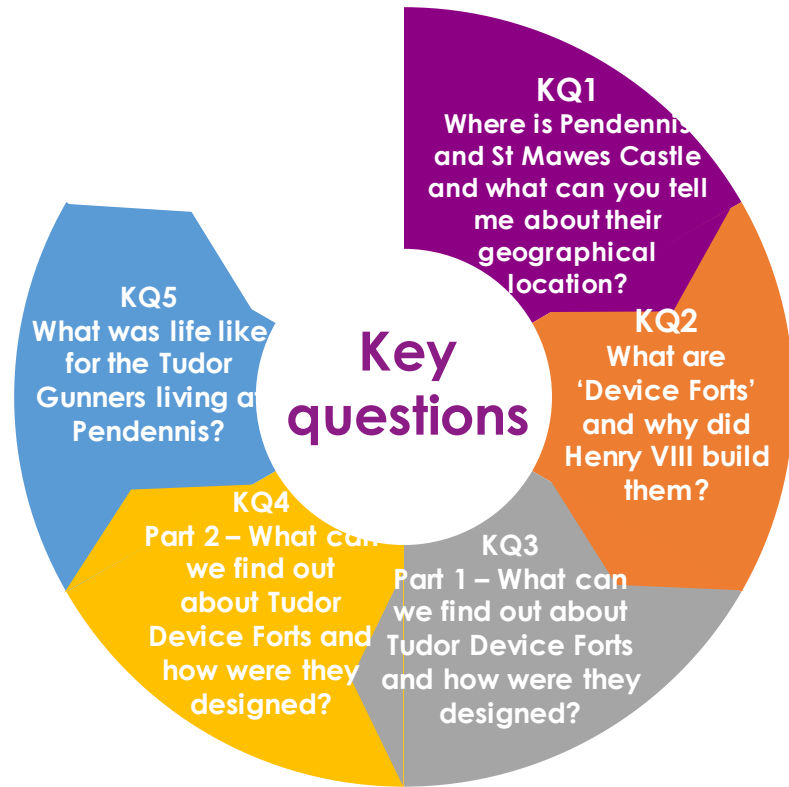


'Little Dennis' blockhouse at Pendennis Castle.



The circular chemise around the base of the Tudor Gun Tower at Pendennis.

# Pendennis Castle



## Books to read

- DKFindOut! Castles by Philip Steele
- See Inside Castles by Katie Daynes and David Hancock

## Key vocabulary

<b>Arrow loops</b>	narrow openings or crosses set inside walls and towers enabling defenders to launch arrows
<b>Artillery Fort</b>	forts with big, heavy guns firing powerful cannonballs or shells
<b>Blockhouses</b>	a small tower or strongpoint containing guns for defence, often of a river, harbour or port
<b>Cannon</b>	Large, powerful gun
<b>Chemise</b>	a platform built to support guns
<b>Crossfire</b>	gunfire from two or more directions passing through the same area
<b>Device Fort</b>	defensive and military building built during the 'device by the king' to defend the coast of England and Wales.
<b>Drawbridge</b>	a moveable bridge typically at the entrance to a castle or tower surrounded by a moat.
<b>Estuary</b>	the mouth of a large river, where the fresh water of the river meets the salt water of the sea, and the water level is affected by the tide
<b>Gatehouse</b>	Entrance to the castle
<b>Garrison</b>	a group of troops living in a fortress or town to defend it
<b>Guards</b>	People who protect someone or something
<b>Gunpowder artillery</b>	weapons that used the explosive force of gunpowder to fire solid stone, iron or lead balls, or hollow explosive shells over long distances.
<b>King Henry VIII</b>	King of England from 1509 until his death in 1547.
<b>Moat</b>	a deep, wide <u>ditch</u> surrounding a castle, fort, or town
<b>Peninsula</b>	a piece of land almost surrounded by water or projecting out into a body of water
<b>Portcullis</b>	a heavy vertically-closing gate
<b>Turret</b>	A small tower on top of a large tower

## Websites

<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/pendennis-castle/school-visits/>

## Top takeaways

Having studied this topic you should be able to:

- Describe the geographical location of Pendennis Castle and why King Henry VIII decided to build a castle here.
- Describe device forts and begin to explain why Henry VIII built them.
- Describe a Tudor device fort.
- Identify key features of a Tudor Gun Tower.
- Discuss defensive features of a Tudor Device Fort and how they worked.
- Explain what life was like for a Tudor Gunner in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.